ALBERTA PRECONDITIONED

ALBERTA CERTIFIED PRECONDITIONED FEEDER PROGRAM

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I. SUMMARY

1984 has proven to be a good year for the Alberta Certified Preconditioning Program. The total number of calves enrolled in the program grew from 8410 in 1983 to 17,314 in 1984. The dry summer along with reinstatement of the paid veterinary visit and better support from veterinarians have all contributed to the growth of the program.

There was also an increased demand from both local and eastern Canadian buyers which was reflected in the price premiums paid for preconditioned calves. Price premiums were calculated for the major sales of preconditioned cattle by comparing the average prices paid for 400 to 700 pound feeder cattle during regular sales, both before and after, to the average price for preconditioned calves. The average premium for 8650 head sold at major sales in Alberta was $4.67 cwt for steers and $4.68 cwt for heifers.

Data compiled from 75 cow-calf producers representing 4868 head of certified preconditioned calves provided a good evaluation of the cost of preconditioning calves. The average cost of preconditioning calves for an average of 49 days was $53.23 per head. This included feed, vaccines, insecticides, antibiotics and labour, but not interest. The cost of vaccines and insecticides was $2.43 while feed represented $40.93 per head. Overall, 3.7% of the calves were individually treated for various diseases and the death loss was .70%. Over half of the death losses were due to bloat. Ten producers (13.3%) experienced severe pneumonia outbreaks in weaned calves and mass medicated the entire group.

During the fall of 1984, information on the performance of calves from weaning until sale was obtained from 19 farms. Data was available on a total of 1478 head or an average of 77 calves per farm. Calves gained an agerage of 1.52 pounds per day over 57 days and cost $58.01 per head or $0.67 per pound of gain. Several of these groups of calves were fed in feedlots and yardage costs were included. Average daily gains ranged from 2.57 to 0.15 lbs. per day. The estimated net return of calves in this sample was $39.25 per calf.

Health data was collected on 2782 preconditioned calves placed in feedlots which represented 30% of preconditioned calves sold. Preconditioning reduced the treatment rate by more than half and reduced death losses to one third that of regular calves. The majority of cattle feeders were happy with the ACPF Program and 83% indicated they would continue to buy preconditioned calves.

II. INTRODUCTION

Preconditioning is a program to reduce the economic loss caused by stress and disease during the movement of calves from the cow herd to the feedlot. Calves which are weaned, vaccinated, and started on feed by the producer should be better prepared to withstand this stress.

Preconditioning is not a new concept to many Alberta producers. The requirements associated with preconditioning are sound management practices which have been followed by some producers for many years. Before 1980, sales of preconditioned calves had been tried at various locations in Alberta with poor success. Cattle buyers and feeders were unwilling to pay a premium for calves that did not carry a guarantee or certificate of the procedures which had been done. The lack of a uniform program and promotion of the concept also contributed to the lack of success and acceptance by cattlemen.

The Alberta Certified Preconditioned Feeder (ACPF) Program developed from meetings held in the County of Ponoka during the spring of 1980. Various representatives of the cattle industry and Alberta Agriculture drafted the initial guidelines for the program. A group of interested producers formed a local society and held their first sale November 8, 1980. The program has expanded to Fort Macleod, Rocky Mountain House and Grande Prairie area in 1981, to Didsbury, Olds, Fairview, Edmonton and Wainwright in 1982, Red Deer and Stettler in 1983 and Athabasca, Drayton Valley, St. Paul and Brooks in 1984.

In 1981, an Advisory Committee was established by Ministerial Order to provide guidance and authority in the operation of the program. Representation on the committee consisted of 3 cattle producers, 3 representatives of Alberta Agriculture, and one each from the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, the Alberta Cattle Feeders Association and the Alberta Auction Market Association. In 1984 it was recommended that the committee be expanded to include a member from the Alberta Cattle Commission. Each year at the annual meeting of the Advisory Committee representatives have the opportunity to propose and discuss changes to the program. Program requirements and operating operating guidelines are recommended to the Minister of Agriculture by the committee.

III. ACPF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

In the ACPF Program, preconditioned calves must be:

(1) At least 4 months of age prior to being vaccinated.

(2) Owned by the operator 45 days prior to sale or shipment.

(3) Castrated and dehorned at least 3 weeks prior to sale or shipment.

(4) Vaccinated with IBR/PI_3 and multi-clostridial (7-way) vaccine 3 weeks prior to sale or shipment.

(5) Treated for warble grubs at least 3 weeks prior to sale or shipment.

(6) Accompanied by an official ACPF certificate completed and signed by both the veterinarian and the producer.

Other vaccination and management practices can be added at the discretion of the producer and recorded. Information on the feeding program and breeding background is also recorded on the preconditioning certificates.

Changes in ACPF Program

In 1984 a complete review of the program options was initiated and several decisions were made. These were:

(1) the preimmunized option was discontinued,

(2) the length of ownership was decreased to 45 days from 60 days, and

(3) the paid veterinarian visit was reinstated.

Although the preimmunized option was initially created to increase the number of certified calves and as such it had fulfilled its purpose and was no longer required. After considerable discussion of the merits and limitations of preimmunization the preimmunization option was dropped.

Beginning in 1984, it was only necessary to own the calves for not less than 45 days prior to sale. Although the program is directed at the primary producers, there are situations where calves can be legitimately purchased, preconditioned and returned for sale.

The paid veterinary visits for eartagging and certification was reinstated for 1984 to help increase the number of preconditioned calves offered for sale and assist the expansion of the program into new areas. Each cow-calf producer will be provided with one veterinary visit per year to a maximum of three years for certification of preconditioned calves. Private veterinarians are paid directly by Alberta Agriculture.

IV. ACPF PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

The Health Management Branch, Animal Health Division of Alberta Agriculture was responsible for the administration of the program. Eartags and certificates were issued to practicing veterinarians through the District Agricultural offices. Private veterinarians supervised the vaccination and treatment of the calves ensured that dehorning and castration had been completed properly, applied the green eartags and recorded the times and products used on the certificates.

After all of the requirements of the ACPF Program were met, the calf producer and veterinarian signed the document to certify that the tagged cattle were fully preconditioned. Following completion of the certificate before sale, one copy was sent to the Branch where it was retained on file. The original copy accompanied the calves at the time of the sale so that the information could be assembled into a catalogue and made available to the buyers.

The certificates and tags were provided to veterinarians at no charge. In addition, one visit by a veterinarian to each participating herd was provided by Alberta Agriculture in 1980 and 1981. A limit of two paid visits per herd was applied in 1982. The paid visit was dropped from the program in 1983. However, the producer participation also dropped in 1983 and the paid visits were reinstated in 1984.

In March 1984, Dwight Karren completed his term as co-ordinator of the ACPF Program and returned to his former position as Regional Livestock Supervisor. A consultant, Brian Harris was hired for the winter months to continue the work of the co-ordinator, to collect data on calf performance during weaning, sale data, feedlot performance and compile the annual report.

District Agriculturists continued to support the program by providing information and assistance to producers, auction market operators and the ACPF co-ordinator. They also conducted on-farm preconditioning trials, distributed the eartags and certificates, organized information meetings and sales, prepared the sale catalogues and obtained much of the sale price data. Rick Williams, District Agriculturist at Ponoka continued to chair the advertising committee which organized and co-ordinated national advertising of the ACPF sales. A brochure outlining the program and sale dates and location was prepared and included as an insert in Cattlemen magazine. Posters announcing sale locations and dates were distributed locally.

V. RESULTS OF 1984 ACPF PROGRAM

A significant increase in participation in the program occurred in 1984. A total of 17,314 calves were certified as preconditioned and 9,150 head were sold at 12 organized preconditioned sales (Table 1). This was an increase of 104% in total numbers certified and 88% in the number sold. This increase occurred throughout Alberta and calves were preconditioned in all regions (Table 2). The number sold in 1984 includes 1600 calves which were preconditioned under Prime Feeders program which meets and exceeds the requirements of the ACPF program. The number of producers also increased from 111 in 1983 to 253 in 1984.

The increase in participation was due to the drought conditions, increased market awareness, continued promotion through the Department of Agriculture, increased support from local veterinarians, and the reinstatement of the paid veterinary visit. The drought this past summer left many producers short of fall grazing capacity and with calves which were lighter in weight than normal. These producers saw the preconditioning program as a good opportunity to wean early, put the calves on feed and sell heavier calves at a premium as well as reduce the load on their fall pastures. In addition, they preconditioned their calves in order to delay marketing them until late November - early December to take advantage of improved market prices. Local veterinarians in a number of areas were more active in organizing meetings on preconditioning and supported the program. Their efforts certainly contributed to the increased producer participation in those areas. The Department of Agriculture continued to promote the program through extension meetings arranged by local District Agriculturists and through the media. The film, "Preconditioning - A Health and Management Strategy", produced during the fall and winter of 1983-84, was shown on television and at a number of meetings throughout the province. Reinstatement of the paid veterinary visit was also very important in stimulating producers to enroll their calves. Both those producers who had never preconditioned before and those who were following their own program elected to take advantage of the ACPF Program.

New preconditioned sales were scheduled in 1984 for Drayton Valley and both auction markets at Lethbridge. Although these sales went ahead, they experienced difficulty in attracting sufficient numbers of calves as is often the case with first sales.

TABLE 1: Number of ACPF Calves Certified and Sold 1980 - 1984

YEAR	LOCATIONS	SALES	NUMBER OF PRODUCERS	CALVES CERTIFIED PRECONDITIONED	SOLD
1980	1	1	6	867	900
1981	4	7	92	5,317	4,014
1982	9	14	198	11,594	6,339
1983	10	11	111	8,410	4,879
1984	11	12	253	17,124	*9,150

*Includes 1600 calves preconditioned under the Prime Feeders program which meets and exceeds the Alberta Certified Precondition Program.

TABLE 2: Distribution of Preconditioned Calves in Alberta in 1984

REGION	NUMBER OF PRODUCERS	CALVES CERTIFIED PRECONDITIONED
1) Lethbridge	22	2,091
2) Calgary	18	1,727
3) Red Deer	62	5,125
4) Vermilion	31	1,328
5) Barrhead	90	5,188
6) Grande Prairie	27	1,692
7) British Columbia	3	163
TOTAL	253	17,314

The numbers of preconditioned calves sold at the major preconditioned calf sales are listed in Table 3. The sales at Fort Macleod, Clyde, Red Deer and Edmonton had increased numbers of calves compared to 1983. Ponoka and Grande Prairie continued to hold strong sales of preconditioned calves.

TABLE 3: Number of Calves Sold at the Certified Preconditioned Sales 1984

LOCATION	DATE	PRECONDITIONED
Fort Macleod	November 29	2117*
Rocky Mountain House	November 30	467
Ponoka	December 1	1510
Clyde	December 3	1655
Grande Prairie	December 3	1365
Red Deer	December 3	685
Edmonton	December 7	851
Other (Less than 200 per sale)		500
		9150

*Includes 1600 on Prime Feeders Program.

Scheduling of sale dates has been a cause for concern. The sale dates are established by the individual auction markets and the dates are then published by the Advertising Committee. While there were three large sales held on December 3rd this year, all three were very successful. The difficulty in scheduling the sales is that they conflict not only with other preconditioned sales, but also with regular cattle auctions in the area. Many of the preconditioned calves are bought through order buyers who have orders for both preconditioned calves and regular calves and would like to attend both types of sales in their areas. Discussions will continue to be held with the various auction managers to reduce conflicting dates as much as possible.

ACPF Sale Results

A summary of the weighted average price and the price differentials between regular calves and ACPF calves is shown in Table 4. Price comparisons were done on seven sales in Alberta. These sales included 8650 head of preconditioned calves which represented 94% of the total sold by auction in 1984. The average prices were mostly obtained from the Canfax program operated at these auctions. If the auction market didn't have a Canfax terminal, the data was tabulated using a computer program from Canfax. Price differentials were determined by comparing the weighted average prices of the preconditioned calf sale to those paid at regular sales before and after, provided there were enough calves in similar weight categories in these sales to give a valid comparison. Since most of the regular calves in the Fort Macleod area were sold in October and early November, there were insufficient numbers of regular calves sold the week before and the week after to make comparisons with the preconditioned sale on November 29.

It is interesting to note the similarity of the average prices in the various areas. There was less than $1.00 per cwt. difference between Clyde, Ponoka and Red Deer. The price differentials at the larger sales were also very uniform. The top prices were paid at Fort Macleod, where a special sale attracted buyers from all over Canada. This sale included 1600 head of reputation calves preconditioned at Prime Feeders Ltd. as well as 500 head of ACPF calves. Their program called for 60 day weaning, ITEME and BVD vaccines, selenium injections, and Ivometin used to treat for warbles and parasites. Both groups of calves were given overnight stand in dry pens before sale. It appears that combining the privately operated Prime Feeders program with the ACPF Program has been very beneficial for all concerned.

The buying condition was an important contributing factor to the prices paid at several sales. Preconditioned calves that have had access to feed and water within 24 hours of sale definitely are not shrunk out as much as regular unweaned calves sold under similar circumstances. Most cattle buyers easily recognize this condition and discount the prices accordingly. As a result it may appear that the preconditioned calves were selling at or only slightly above regular prices and producers were often disappointed. However, considering the extra pounds they were selling, they in fact did get a premium.

TABLE 4: Summary of Prices and Differentials for ACPF Calves Sold in 1984

LOCATION	DATE OF SALE	TOTAL NO. CALVES	STEERS NO. OF CALVES	PRICE AVE. $	PRICE DIFF. $	HEIFERS NO. OF CALVES	PRICE AVE. $	PRICE DIFF. $
Fort Macleod	Nov. 29	2117	1165	93.42	*	952	83.14	*
Rocky Mtn. Hse.	Nov. 30	467	285	86.46	+2.98	182	79.27	+2.96
Ponoka	Dec. 1	1510	820	88.32	+4.04	690	79.54	+4.27
Clyde	Dec. 3	1655	1101	88.11	+4.79	554	78.12	+5.97
Grande Prairie	Dec. 3	1365	917	84.91	+4.55	488	74.93	+4.02
Red Deer	Dec. 3	685	431	88.84	+5.09	254	80.22	+5.14
Edmonton	Dec. 7	851	545	86.84	+4.88	306	78.96	+3.99
TOTAL OF ALL SALES		8,650	5,264	88.41	+4.67	3,386	79,15	+4.68

*Not enough feeder cattle in the two sales before or after to give accurate comparison. The main run of cattle were moved in October and early November.

The price premiums for previous years are compared in Table 5. In 1984 the average price differentials for 8650 preconditioned calves was $4.67 for steers and $4.68 for heifers. The average premium over five years has been $4.80 per cwt. for steers and $4.09 for heifers. These premiums are a good indication of the strong demand for certified preconditioned calves. The majority of the top quality calves were purchased by eastern Canada buyers and the balance was mainly bought by local farmer-feeders.

TABLE 5: Price Differentials for Preconditioned Calves by Year (1980-1984)

		STEERS		HEIFERS	
YEAR	NO. SALES	NO. HEAD	PRICE DIFFERENTIAL	NO. HEAD	PRICE DIFFERENTIAL
1980	1	495	5.66	223	4.04
1981	6	1518	4.04	1496	2.66
1982	7	2827	5.56	1683	5.74
1983	8	2605	4.50	1574	2.43
1984	7	5264	4.67	3386	4.68
Overall Average Price			4.80		4.09

Weaning Performance

In 1984 an effort was made to collect performance data on as many preconditioned calves as possible. Data was collected from a total of 19 herds. Initial farm weaning weights and the final sale weights were used to calculate gains. The costs of feed, medicines and labor were obtained and used to calculate the cost of gain. The results are tabulated in Table 6.

These 19 herds included 582 heifers and 896 steers for a total of 1478 head. Group size varied from 10 to 309 calves. The daily gain ranged from a high of 2.57 to a low of 0.15 pounds per day. The lower value occurred in one herd which suffered a pneumonia outbreak. The average cost of gain in

TABLE 6: Summary of Performance of Preconditioned Calves from Weaning to Sale, 1984

Number of Herds	19
Number of Calves	1478
Average Starting Weight, lbs.	438.2
Average Sale Weight, lbs.	524.8
Average Gain, lbs.	86.6
Days Weaned	57
Average Daily Gain, lbs.	1.52
Total Cost, $/calf	58.01
Cost Per Pound of Gain $/lb.	0.67

in these 19 herds was $58.01 per calf or $0.67 per pound of gain. This cost includes feed, medicines, and labor, but not interest. Using this information, along with the average Alberta selling prices (Oct. and Dec.), it is possible to estimate a profit for preconditioning. It was assumed that the calves would have normally been sold early in October. Using the starting weight of 438.2 pounds at $83.00 per cwt. (October 5th price for top steers at Ponoka) gives a value of $363.71. Adding the preconditioning cost per calf of $58.01 plus $3.00 for death loss equals $424.72 invested in each calf before sale. Using sale weights of 524.8 pounds and the average price for the province of 88.41 per cwt., the gross return of preconditioned calves was $463.97. The difference in values represents an estimated profit for preconditioning of $39.25.

ACPF Producer Survey

The responses to the cow-calf producer survey was excellent again this year and are summarized in Table 7. Seventy-five producers representing 4868 head of cattle or 28% of the total preconditioned returned the survey. Weaning and starting calves on feed has been shown to have some risks. Although the majority of producers experienced few problems and only treated 3.7% of their weaned calves, some producers encountered disease outbreaks and had to mass medicate the entire group. The overall death loss was low, 0.7% compared to an estimated 2.2% for regular calves in feedlots (Table 8). It is important to note that half of the death loss was reported as due to bloat. In these herds, bloat was strongly associated with starting calves onto grain while feeding alfalfa hay. Treatment costs averaged $5.56 per calf treated which works out to an average of $0.87 for each calf weaned. Although the average death loss was 0.7%, more than two-thirds of the producers didn't have any death loss at all, and 36% of the producers didn't treat any calves.

Generally, the feed rations for preconditioned calves consisted of oats, supplement and free-choice hay. The average estimated intakes were 5.0 pounds of grain, 0.5 pounds of supplement and 13.8 pounds of hay. Several producers placed their calves in custom feedlots. The cost of gain for these calves was very close to the averages of the other producers who fed their calves at home. Although feedlots also charge for yardage, they were able to use silage rations and get better overall gains. Average labor and labor costs were estimated by a number of producers to be one hour per calf for the feeding period. The average labor rate claimed by calf producers was $9.00 per hour.

Producer Comments About the Certified Preconditioning Program

Part of the producer survey was designed to determine what producers felt about the program and how many producers have remained with the program over the years. Approximately 36% of the producers who answered the survey had preconditioned their calves for more than one year. These producers represented 57% of the calves in the survey. This would suggest that producers tend to continue with the program each year. Of those replying to the survey, 81% indicated they would continue to precondition their calves.

The major complaint of the people who wouldn't continue with the program was not enough return for the costs involved. Unfortunately, these people were not able to weigh their calves and see the gains they were making to

TABLE 7: Summary of 1984 Producer Survey

Production Data	
Total number of calves	4868
Average herd size	65
Average selling weight - steers	579
- heifers	534
Days weaned, average	49
Health Data	
Calves individually treated	3.7%
Calves mass medicated	12.0%
Death loss - total	0.7%
- bloat	0.35%
Cost Data	
Feed, $/head	40.93
Vaccine & insecticides, $/head	2.43
Treatment cost, $/head	0.87
Labor - 1 hour per calf	$ 9.00
Total, $/head (not including interest)	$53.23

offset these costs. Of the producers who responded, 87% indicated they would be interested in weighing their calves. It was suggested the Department of Agriculture should be more active in encouraging and assisting with the weighing of preconditioned calves.

Over the years we have had a number of comments that the minimum weaning time of 30 days was not adequate. However, 52% of the producers surveyed in 1984 felt the minimum time was adequate. The balance of the producers felt that it should be increased to an average of 51 days. The average weaning time used by those answering the survey was 49 days. The general feeling among producers appears to be that a 30 day weaning period is adequate if everything goes well, however, if there is a disease outbreak there is not enough time to get the calves returned to health and regain the weight which they have lost. Occasionally, calves which have been sick during weaning will have a relapse after sale.

Most producers (77%) felt the other requirements of the ACPF Program were adequate. The major concern was the length of the weaning period. Some of the more common comments were; sales are too late, all cattle at sales should be certified preconditioned, sales should not be held on the same day, more advertising promotion, calves did well, amazed at weight gain. These comments sum up the success of the 1984 season.

ACPF Feeder Survey

The performance of certified preconditioned calves after sale was monitored by using a survey of cattle feeders who purchased ACPF calves. We were able to collect data on 2782 calves from 36 feeders including 900 head from eight producers in Ontario and 1842 head from 28 feedlots in Alberta. These cattle represented 30% of the preconditioned calves sold. The results of this survey are shown in Table 8. This summary includes data from those feedlots which had both preconditioned and regular calves (17 feedlots) and preconditioned calves only (11 feedlots).

Treatment rates and death losses were much lower in the preconditioned calves than regular auction calves both in Alberta and Ontario. In Alberta, 6.8% of the preconditioned calves were treated at the feedlot, 0.9% died compared to regular calves which had a 15.0% treatment rate and a death loss of 2.6%. If the comparisons are restricted to only those feedlots with both preconditioned and regular calves, the advantage in favor of preconditioning

TABLE 8: Health Performance of all ACPF Calves Surveyed in 1984

PROGRAM TYPE	NUMBER OF LOTS	NUMBER OF ANIMAL	PERCENT TREATED	PERCENT DIED	FEED (1) ADAPTATION
ALBERTA					
Preconditioned	28	1842	6.8%	0.92%	1.25
Regular (2)	17	2387	15.0%	2.6%	
ONTARIO					
Preconditioned	8	900	7.3%	0.22%	1.2
Regular	5	846	12.4%	0.82%	1.5
OVERALL					
Preconditioned	36	2782	6.9%	0.68%	1.23
Regular	22	3233	14.4%	2.2%	1.88

(1) Feed adaptation was coded as 1 for no problem to 4 for major problems.
(2) Data from one producer was not included in the regular group since there was a severe disease outbreak in which 65 head died out of 396 purchased.

was reduced. In these feedlots, 11.0% of preconditioned versus 15.0% of regular calves were treated and 1.7% versus 2.6% died. The calves that went to Ontario performed well. A total of 7.3% of the preconditioned calves were treated and 0.22% died, while 12.4% and 0.82% of regular calves were treated and died respectively.

Caution should be used when interpreting one years data with relatively small numbers. If the data are combined from 1980 to 1984 as in Table 9, the results are more meaningful. Of 8,348 preconditioned calves fed in Alberta, the average treatment rate was 9.9% and the death loss was 0.7% compared to 10,146 head of regular cattle which had a treatment rate of 20.4% and death losses of 2.2%. In Ontario, 1874 preconditioned calves had an average of 8.5%

treated and 0.2% died, compared to regular cattle with 24.9% treated and 0.75% death loss. From this data it would appear that preconditioning has reduced the treatment rates by more than half and reduced death losses to one-third that of regular calves.

Another part of the survey evaluated feedlot operator's opinions of the ACPF Program. Of those that responded, 52% of the Alberta feeders and 67% of the Ontario feeders had bought preconditioned calves before. The majority of feeders were happy with the program. Of those surveyed, 83% said they would continue to buy preconditioned calves. There has been some concern among buyers about the length of weaning. Of these, 59% felt the 30 day minimum weaning was adequate. The other feeders felt the weaning program should be extended to an average of 52 days.

A number of feeders were extremely happy with the performance of the cattle. One producer from Ontario wrote "I purchased 365 preconditioned calves in early December; I never experienced one sick calf. These calves came in at 630 pounds average weight. Although I have no weigh scale on the farm, I figure they now average 850 pounds. Naturally, I am very pleased with the progress of these calves through the winter months."

TABLE 9: Health Performance of ACPF Calves 1980 - 1984

	PRECONDITIONED			REGULAR		
	NO. CALVES	PERCENT TREATED	PERCENT DIED	NO. CALVES	PERCENT TREATED	PERCENT DIED
ALBERTA						
1980	236	7.6	0.0	1088	18.7	1.0
1981	1513	17.9	1.2	627	26.8	1.0
1982	2724	7.3	0.5	3269	15.5	2.0
1983	2033	10.4	0.5	2775	29.9	2.8
1984	1842	6.8	0.9	2387	15.0	2.6
TOTAL	8348			10,146		
AVERAGE		9.9	0.7		20.4	2.2
ONTARIO						
1980	213	12.0	.6	770	46.0	1.0
1981	139	11.5	0.0	109	20.2	0.9
1982	186	8.3	0.3	907	18.8	0.4
1983	436	8.5	0.0	432	25.7	0.9
1984	900	7.3	0.2	846	12.4	0.8
TOTAL	1874			3064		
AVERAGE		8.5	0.2		24.9	0.75

VI. CONCLUSION

Producer acceptance has grown substantially in 1984. Some problems still remain to be worked out. Major concerns are scheduling of Preconditioned sales so that there are no date conflicts, improving the selling condition and health status of calves at certain sales, sale organization and promotion at the smaller sales, communication of information on individual feeding and management practices from producers to feedlot operators. In a number of areas strong producer groups are overcoming these problems by being actively involved in developing their own programs, promoting their sales and evaluating the condition of the calves coming to the sales.

Some producer groups have felt that the ACPF Program is good, but could be further improved. A group in the Fort Macleod area have developed their own program with Prime Feeders, where the minimum weaning time has been increased to 60 days, ITEME, BVD, Ivermectin and selenium injections are given as part of the required program. Their sale was very successful, which would indicate there is a demand for this high quality product provided it is promoted and supported by the people involved.

Some buyers have criticized the Program saying the preconditioned calves are carrying too much condition, yet other buyers are quite willing to buy these fleshier calves, realizing that they will better withstand the stress of shipping and induction into the feedlot.

1984 was a good year to precondition calves. Because of the dry conditions the amount of fall pasture was limited which could have decreased the weaning weights of calves if producers hadn't weaned early. Many producers realized that preconditioning is a management tool that can be used to extend fall pastures and improve gains of their calves. As such, preconditioning is not suitable for every farm every year. Producers with ample fall pastures and calves that are gaining 1.5 to 2 pounds per day while on the cow would have little benefit from preconditioning. Preconditioning is, however, definitely a viable option for those cow-calf producers who have limited fall grazing capacity and average daily calf gains will not reach 1.5 lbs. per day.